

The Vermont congressional delegation today introduced legislation to let the state implement a single-payer health care system that could become a model for the nation.

Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) introduced a Senate bill and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) filed legislation in the House that would let Vermont and other states provide better health care at less cost beginning in 2014.

All three members of the delegation joined Gov. Peter Shumlin at a Statehouse news conference one week ago and pledged to help the state secure federal waivers needed to implement sweeping health care reforms.

Sanders said, "It is my strong hope that Vermont will lead the nation in a new direction through a Medicare-for-all single-payer approach. At a time when 50 million Americans lack health insurance and when the cost of health care continues to soar, we must do all we can to lower the costs and improve the quality of care."

Leahy said, "This is a bill to give Vermont and other states the choice to go above and beyond the national standard by letting states devise their own reforms. Vermont has always been a leader in health care quality and access. This bill would keep the ball in Vermont's court, giving us the flexibility we want to offer Vermonters the best care and coverage while controlling costs."

Welch said, "Vermont has long led the charge in providing better health care at a lower cost. Providing Vermont and other states the flexibility they need to innovate will strengthen health care throughout the nation."

Dr. William Hsiao, a Harvard consultant to the Vermont Legislature, said in a recent report that that state could improve health care and save \$2.1 billion by 2025 if the needed federal waivers were obtained.

Under the Vermont delegation proposal, states would be able to seek waivers from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department three years sooner than allowed under the new federal health care law. States could qualify for waivers only for plans that are at least as comprehensive and affordable as the federal model and cover at least as many people. States could not offer lower quality or less affordable coverage.

The waiver provision also requires HHS to create a coordinated process so states in a single application also could seek waivers already available under Medicare, Medicaid, and the children's health insurance program.

A fact sheet on the new "State Leadership in Healthcare Act" is available [here](#).